

VZCZCXRO2018
OO RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHAD #1248/01 2061300
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 251300Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9432
RHMFIUU/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1205
RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001248

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/RA; INR/R/MR; PA; INR/NESA; INR/B;
RRU-NEA
IIP/G/NEA-SA
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE; NSC
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA
USCINCCENT FOR POLAD
LONDON FOR ERELI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [TC](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: BLAIR ROUND TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST;
BUSH'S CALL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

¶1. SUMMARY: A UK-based Lebanese writer in "Al Ittihad" states "Bush's conference exploits the current weakness of the Palestinians" while an Egyptian writer describes the peace initiative as a "Feast of the Wicked." A UAE columnist in "Al Ittihad" states Iran is politically blind in pursuing a policy of interfering in the internal affairs of the Gulf countries. The editorial in "Al-Bayan" does not expect Blair to make any progress in his Quartet meeting. A second "Al-Bayan" editorial by an Egyptian writer views Israel as manipulating the US and the US as manipulating Arabs. A UAE columnist for "Al-Bayan" opines that while oil divides Palestine and Israel, gas creates a balance between these two countries in light of the USD 4 billion gas extracting agreement with a British company under the license of the Palestinian government. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Under the headline "Bush's conference exploits the weakness of the Palestinians," UK-based Lebanese writer Abdul Wahab Badar Khan wrote a 07/24 op-ed in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic semi-official daily "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000):

"The situation in the Middle East does not help to make anybody believe in this (peace conference) initiative. . . . Bush Junior is weak and lacks credibility because his Iraq mission failed and he resorted to the peace process hoping to prevent the morass in Iraq. . . . Bush's conference exploits the current weakness of the Palestinians who have no option other than to accept any initiative to have a Palestinian state."

¶3. Under the headline "Feast of the Wicked", Director of the Institute for Arab Research and Studies, Dr. Ahmed Youssef Ahmed, wrote a 07/24 op-ed in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic semi-official daily "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000):

"The timing of Bush's peace conference initiative is the worst Bush's speech . . . did not address vital issues such as the status of the Palestinian refugees. . . . The only positive element was when Bush stressed the importance of Israel not to continue its occupation of the West Bank. . . . Bush wants to win his war in Iraq by showing an accomplishment in Palestine."

¶4. Under the headline "Iran and Making Enemies", UAE columnist Mohammed Khalfan Sowafi wrote a 07/25 op-ed in Abu Dhabi-based

Arabic semi-official daily "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000):

"Iran is politically blind in pursuing a policy of interfering in the internal affairs of the Gulf countries. . . . Iran is living in what some call a 'state of political blindness' because while the Gulf countries aim at improving relations with Iran and give the current Iranian leadership the opportunity to portray itself to the world in a better light than its familiar image of extremism and interference in the internal affairs of other countries, Tehran does not seem to want to change this image."

¶5. Under the headline "Blair's First Round," a 07/24 editorial in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan" (circulation 85,000) reads:

"Former envoy James Wolfenson thinks Blair is wasting his time, does not expect him to make any progress in the Quartet meeting and will likely face the same fate of failure. . . . We hope Blair benefits from Wolfenson's failure and will have a roadmap rather than just words on paper."

¶6. Under the headline "Manipulating Arabs and the US," Egyptian columnist Magdi Shendi wrote a 07/24 op-ed in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan" (circulation 85,000):

"The peace conference is initiated by Israel with the goal of normalizing relations with more Arab countries publicly, to open more channels of communication. . . . Israel manipulates the U.S. and the U.S. manipulates Arabs."

¶7. Under the headline "Between Oil and Gas," UAE columnist Mohammed Mutawa wrote a 07/25 op-ed in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan" (circulation 85,000):

ABU DHABI 00001248 002 OF 002

"We worry that the tragedy of the Oslo Accords will be repeated in the current experiment of the international peace conference. . . . It is expected that the Palestinian authority and Israel will sign a political agreement worth four billion dollars. This deal is about purchasing natural gas from a British company that will extract gas from Gaza beaches under the license of the Palestinian government, which will in turn provide an income to the Palestinian government of Abu Mazen amounting to one billion dollars annually. . . . The gas could create a balance between Israel and the project of legitimizing a country in order to strike the deal."

SISON